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ABSTRACT

Nonparticipation in traditional adult basic education programs is an ongoing concern for educators and administrators. Most studies of such nonparticipation have focused on lack of motivation or other psychological deterrents, suggesting that individuals have a choice and that they or their culture are somehow deficient if they "choose" not to participate. This privileged view of choice masks social, economic, and political forces that intercede in motivation and desire. This book looks at the historical context and social structures of everyday life that influence the educational participation of Mexican American adults in the Southwest. Fieldwork included extensive participant observation in community centers and adult education centers in Colorado Springs and Denver and in-depth interviews with 30 Mexican American adults. Interviewees were U.S.-born; bilingual; high school dropouts; and not enrolled in an adult basic education, literacy, or GED program. Chapter contents are: (1) theoretical underpinnings (dialectic between the individual and society, politics of education, manifestations of hegemony in adult basic education and English literacy, acculturation and resistance); (2) narrative profiles of five Mexican American adult learners; (3) colonialism in the Southwest and historical influences on identity and educational participation; (4) influences of early educational experiences; (5) adult educational experiences; (6) cultural actions, or practices of resistance, to deal with educational and learning issues; and (7) specific factors impeding Chicano participation and recommendations for restructuring programs. (Contains 108 references.) (SV)

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